

Why Ruth 2:1-3 Is Unprecedented in All of Scripture

Now Naomi had a relative of her husband, a man of prominence and means from the clan of Elimelek. His name was Boaz. Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Please let me go into the field and glean among the heads of grain behind anyone in whose eyes I may find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she went to glean in the field behind the harvesters. She happened to come to a part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek (Ruth 2:1-3).

The way in which this is stated is very unusual and unprecedented in all of Scripture. It essentially says that Ruth got "lucky" or by "chance" and "coincidence" found herself "fortunately" in the field of Boaz. The phraseology is so peculiar it has led to much speculation about what the author intended. Indeed, the author used an ironic tone to grab our attention and turn our focus to the invisible hand of God's providence in the daily affairs of ordinary people. Ruth arrived at the field of Boaz not because an angel led her, or because a voice spoke to her from heaven, or because of any other miraculous occurrence. Instead, we see that God's invisible hand was working through Ruth's decision about which field to glean.

In Acts 17:26, Paul says that it is ultimately God who determines where and when we live. By peering beneath the loom of our lives, we often see what appears to be various knots of free will and choice, but by peering above the loom, as God does, we see that He was weaving nothing less than a meaningful and orderly tapestry out of the frayed ends of our lives. When life comes together, some people will give credit

to happenstance, circumstance or chance rather than God's providence. But the Bible is clear: Fortune is a false God who likes to take credit for God's creativity (Isa. 65:11). This is the big point the author of Ruth is driving home: *God is involved in our lives and directing our destiny.*

Adding to the irony, we witness that not only was Ruth in the field of Boaz, but she, by providence, also happened to be there when he was making the rounds to examine his business venture. We then hear the first words of Boaz in the story, and they were a brief prayer for his employees, that God's hand of providence would be with them. Echoing the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24, his workers likewise responded with a brief prayer that God would bless their boss.

Looking back at your life, whom has God brought into your life who was really a blessing? {eoa}

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